



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS  
WITH THE GULF STATES INCLUDING YEMEN**

**Working Group visit to Qatar and  
Interparliamentary Meeting in Oman**

**Doha, Muscat**

**15 - 22 March 2008**

*Report by Ms Lilli Gruber, Chair of the Delegation for relations with the Gulf  
States, including Yemen*

## A. Introduction

This mission allowed combining (i) a working group to Qatar and (ii) an Interparliamentary meeting in Oman, from the 17th to the 22st March 2008, with the participation of 6 Members led by Ms Lilli Gruber (PSE, I). Members had the opportunity to visit Doha and Ras Laffan in Qatar, and Mascate, as well as Nizwa, in Oman; all in all, the Delegation held more than 20 meetings with Members of the legislative bodies in both countries, Government Ministers, EU Ambassadors, NGOs / Research Centres as well as representatives of the Civil Society.

Notably, the EP Delegation held talks with the following:

- in Qatar:
  - Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry, Mr. Abdallah Bin Hamad Al Attiyah,
  - HE Mohammed bin Moubarak A-Khulaifi, Chair of the *Majlis Esh-Shoura*,
  - HE Issa bin Rabia Al-Kawari, Vice-Chair of the *Majlis Esh-Shoura*,
  - HE Mohammed Abdullah Mutib Al Rumaihi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,
  - Representatives of the Qatar Foundation,
  - Representatives and journalists of Al Jazeera TV
  
- in Oman:
  - H.E Sheikh Ahmed Al Issai, Chair of Majlis Shura,
  - H.E Naser bin Hilal al Mawli, deputy President of al Majlis
  - H.E Dr. Yahya bin Mahfouz Al Munziri, president of Majlis Al Dawla
  - H.E Dr. Rawya bint Sa'oud al bu S'eideyyeh, Minister of higher education
  - H.E Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister responsible of foreign affairs,
  - H.E Maqboul bin Ali Sultan, Minister of commerce and industry,
  - H.E. Taleb Bin Miran Al Raisi, Head of the Department of economic and technical cooperation in Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
  - H.E Ali bin Saoud al Bimani, President of the Sultan Qabous University

## **B. Qatar**

### *General context*

Qatar's political system is evolving from a traditional tribal system towards introducing features of democratic rule. In Qatar the pace of political reform, along with wider economic and social development, accelerated after the present Emir Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power in 1995. The Emir remains committed to a programme of reform aimed at increasing popular participation in decision-making, modernisation, openness and media freedom. Qatar released its last political prisoner in 2001.

A new constitution adopted by referendum came into force in June 2005; it contains provisions for the establishment of an independent judiciary, equal rights for men and women and freedom of expression for the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of worship. Whereas Qatar is developing into a constitutional monarchy, it doesn't allow yet political parties. Likewise, the ongoing democratisation process seems to be suffering some delays, as the first-ever elections to the country's national legislature, Legislative Council (**Majlis al-Shura**) are constantly delayed since mid-2005.

The reasons for this delay, apparently, are twofold:

[i] the 2005 nationality law creates a differentiation between citizens who had already settled in Qatar pre-1930 and those that settled after 1930 (and their descendants), who are considered "naturalised"; there is no agreement yet on whether naturalised citizens should enjoy full political rights, i.e. not only the right to vote but also the right to hold public office

[ii] members of the *Al Ghafran* tribe are reported to be able to equally claim Saudi and Qatari nationality ; a final decision on how they should be treated may have an impact on the total number of voters [as Qatar has an indigenous population of 174,000 inhabitants only]

### *Meetings with Qatar's parliamentary structures*

It is foreseen that the **Majlis al-Shura** will eventually have legislative powers and the right to dismiss ministers; on the other hand, the Emir will also have the authority to dissolve the Council at any time. According to the Constitution, 30 Members should be elected by universal suffrage and another 15 appointed by the Emir. Municipal elections took place in 2007 - with the participation of 3 women, out of whom one was elected.

Asked on any news on the plans to hold elections, M. Mohammed bin Moubarak A-Khulaifi, Shura President, was not extremely precise: "*perhaps in a year or two*" ; for Qatar, this is not a postponement but rather the proof that "*we are examining the issue extremely carefully, consulting with all sectors of the society*", in order to avoid making mistakes. Thus, political parties "*at the moment do not exist - but who knows what the future holds*". M. A-Khulaifi did, however, confirm that the municipal elections were widely perceived as "*extremely successful*" and were seen as a test-run for general elections.

As things stand, the Majlis al-Shura is consulted before any legislation being enacted and can propose amendments. Shura Members were however keen to point out that, once elected, it is

assumed that the Qatari Constitution -which provides expressly for a legislative, and not merely consultative, body-, will fully apply.

In the general discussion that followed, Qatari Shura Members appeared conscious of the fact that Qatar is at the beginning of the democratisation process, and were eager to find out more on the European experience as a multi-national assembly; some questions focused on the Transitional Arab Parliament, which is currently being set-up (launched under SG Amr Mussa at the Arab League's summit in Algiers in March 2005, the Arab transitional Parliament is based in Damascus for a period of five years), and on whether lessons could be drawn from the EP experience.

*Exchange of views on foreign policy issues with HE Mohammed Abdullah Mutib Al Rumaihi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs*

Despite its small size, Qatar, a close US ally, is playing an increasingly important role in international affairs; Doha has been a proponent of a neutral (non Hamas-led) national unity Government in Palestine, and favours a two-state solution. Unlike other Gulf States, Qatar, pragmatically, retains low-level ties with Israel, which has a trade mission in Doha. In its attempt to revive the Middle-East peace process; Qatar also pledged to pay the Palestinian Authority's salaries after the EU cut off aid following the formation of the Hamas Government. Pledging 300 million dollars in favour of re-building Lebanon was a similar case of "check-book diplomacy", as probably was the alleged financial compensation offered to Libya in the "Bulgarian nurses" case.

M. Al Rumaihi insisted that his country intends to "*play a dynamic role in international affairs (...) beyond just petro-chemicals*". Thus, for instance, Qatar's tenure at the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member allowed initiatives to be taken "*in favour of developing international humanitarian law*". Of course, "*when you decide to play an active role, you get in trouble with regional and sub-regional strategic interests*"; nonetheless, Qatar intends to be "*as independent as possible*".

Relations with the EU, he stressed, are currently mainly conducted "*via the Member-States*", due to the current privileged links (in commercial or investment terms) which exist with some of them - mainly France and the UK. Although the Euro is not yet fulfilling its full potential<sup>1</sup>, Qatar gives importance to the EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement which is currently being negotiated and, furthermore, would like the GCC to become more active in foreign policy and develop "*an international outlook*". M. Al Rumaihi underlined that this is the underlying rationale behind the GCC being granted observer status at the UN General Assembly.

Asked by the Chair, on other foreign policy priorities, M. Al Rumaihi stressed the following:

- Saudi Arabia / Qatar relations: Saudi Arabia is an important and major ally for the US ; but "*they have to accept and respect our policies*".
- Iran: "*at GCC level we have decided to have direct relations*" with Teheran. Teheran needs regional stability as badly as the other Gulf countries. Doha is against any military

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, M. Al Rumaihi went on to explain that it is difficult to perceive the Euro as a strong international currency when EU-politics seem weak - "*as witnessed by the refusal of the European Constitution in France*". He furthermore fielded the idea of, perhaps, pricing Gas Exports in Euros (instead of USD).

option against Iran - and there are provisions that would not allow the US military bases hosted in Qatar to be used in such a context.

Therefore, what is important is to agree upon a containment policy; Iran is not a danger yet, and is not a giant either. In the long term, the aim is to favour exchanges and openness with the other Gulf countries: "*when Iranians come here, they realise what they are losing in terms of economic prosperity*".

- Safety of oil supply: "*this is our mission*". To ensure this stability, "*we are working very hard*", and sometimes difficult choices have to be made when it comes to national sovereignty.

### Economical and Financial Aspects

Oil and gas account for more than 60% of GDP, roughly 85% of export earnings, and 70% of government revenues. Oil and gas have made Qatar one of the world's faster growing and higher per-capita income countries. Current GDP growth is 8,3% and expected to rise in 2009 ; proved oil reserves of more than 15 billion barrels should ensure continued output at current levels for 23 years. Qatar's proved reserves of natural gas exceed 25 trillion cubic meters, more than 5% of the world total and third largest in the world. This means that, already the largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) producer in the world, Qatar is seeking to triple production by 2012: thus, its future economy will depend increasingly on gas. Qatari investments for LNG supply terminals are made in Italy (Livorno) and in the UK (Wales).

This dimension was at the centre of the field-trip the Delegation undertook to Ras Laffan and of the discussions the Delegation had with Mr. Abdallah Bin Hamad Al Attiyah, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry. Mr Al Attiyah confirmed the importance natural gas has in the national economy, and stressed that Qatar is the only country in the world that sells LNG to 3 continents - America, Asia and Europe (where it is constructing the biggest natural gas terminal ever). Asked by Members on the possibility of building a pipe-line that would allow smooth supplies to Europe, he nevertheless appeared sceptical: such a pipeline "*would be too long*", and would have to pass by many countries - "*it would be a nightmare*". From this point of view, LNG delivery by ships is, indeed, both "*safer*" and "*more flexible - ships can move*". Qatar, therefore, has commissioned the biggest LNG gas-ships ever to be built (from a capacity of 145.000m<sup>3</sup> to 265.000m<sup>3</sup>).

The Vice-Prime Minister underlined that "*Qatar believes in LNG: we have been supplying Japan for already 10 years without a single taker default despite Japan's increased needs*" (following a nuclear reactor shut-down in 2006). Current delivery times depend on distance: 3 weeks for Japan, 4 weeks for the US - but Qatar can cope at very short term with increased demand. Safety of supply is an issue Qatar takes very seriously - and the Vice PM stressed that "*we are already covering 20% of Spain's needs*"; in short, on LNG, the Vice PM felt that "*we have no competitors*". There are no elements of political conditionality in any of the contracts Qatar negotiates, as "*business is business*". Current gas-prices are, however, "*unfair. (...) I believe gas should be treated at parity to oil*".

## C. Oman

### General context

Oman is the oldest independent state in the Arab world; the Al Bu Said dynasty, which came to power after a short period of occupation by Iran [1737-1739], still rules the country. Whereas in the 19th century, Oman held possessions on the East African Coast (Zanzibar, Mombassa) and had regular trade links with the Indian subcontinent, by the time of the First World War the British had established a de facto protectorate. The current Sultan, Qaboos Al Said bin Said, took power in 1970, succeeding his father. Contrary to the former's regime, overly repressive and unpopular, Qaboos took decisive steps to modernise the country's economy and society; one has to bear in mind that today Oman ranks 58th in the UN Human Development Index, but back in 1970 when Qaboos took power, the country very much belonged to the third world, with a grand total of 2 schools, less than 10 kms of roads and virtually no electricity. The modernisation which did take place in the last 30 years means that the Sultan currently enjoys incomparable political legitimacy.

This has also, however, made it, to some extent, more challenging to effectively open up the political system: power remains extremely centralised\*. While there is no constitution as such, a Basic Law was issued by royal decree and promulgated on November 6, 1996 - providing for a directly elected Shura.

### Meetings with the Majlis Ash Shura and the Majlis al-Dawla

The 1996 Basic Law established a bicameral parliament composed of the **Consultative Council** (Majlis ash-Shura) and the **Council of State** (Majlis al-Dawla). The Consultative Council is composed of 84 members elected in 61 provinces by universal suffrage (since 2002) for four-year terms, renewable once. The last elections to the Majlis ash Shura took place in October 27, 2007 (with a 78% turnout). Some 632 candidates stood for the 84 seats in the council; they were all independent and the most successful of them campaigned along religious and tribal lines, as political parties do not exist in Oman. Only 38 of the 64 candidates who were standing for re-election were successful: this confirms the general assessment of most observers that the electoral process was indeed open and fair. However, although two female candidates were elected in 2003, no women were elected to the council this time, despite there being 20 female candidates. The Majlis Ash Shura president is appointed by the Sultan, and its Vice-President elected by its peers. The Majlis ash Shura gives its opinion on draft laws, proposes amendments and can propose legislation in some fields.

During the meetings which took place with the Majlis Ash Shura, its Chair, Sheikh Ahmed Al Issai, showed a strong interest in the EU's latest enlargement as well as, more generally, on the pro-European orientation shown in these recent years by states like Georgia or the Ukraine; while he pleaded for EU's enlargement to Turkey he did not, however, believe that such a move could provide for a decisive bridge towards the Muslim world: "*The Middle-East does not need any additional bridges to Europe ; North Africa is already a bridge, bridges already exist*".

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\* To conclude that there are no democratic traditions in Oman would however be quite wrong: Omanis belong to the Ibaddite form of Islam, which is distinct from the Shi'a or Sunni interpretations. As such, they elect their Imams.

The EU, he stressed, should play a more active role in the region and preventing the US from repeating its mistakes; *"if the US wanted to listen to our advice, we would tell them that there is no need to come from thousand of miles away in order to impose their vision of democracy the way they do"*. Many visions of democracy exist - and can be seen already in the Gulf: *"we have advised other GCC countries to generalise electoral practices along our model, and this will happen over time"*.

The series of exchanges of views which followed, co-chaired by Mrs Gruber and H.E Naser bin Hilal al Mawli, Majlis Ash Shoura Vice-President or Dr. Yahya bin Mahfouz Al Munziri, president of Majlis Al Dawla, allowed for Members to get an insight in the way the two houses organise their legislative proceedings: the Majlis ash Shoura and the Majlis al Dawla see their role as complementary rather as antagonistic. Members from both Delegations deplored the fact, however, that no women were elected at the October 2007 elections: while many explanations were offered (women competing against each other, or women not voting for women), the Omani side did not appear negatively inclined on the possibility of a quota being introduced in order to enhance their presence in public life. As a Member of the Majlis al Dawla put it, *"women did not want a quota so far, but at the end of the day, this will probably be one of the ways that will be used in order to favour their participation"*.

In the run-up to the release of the movie *fitna* by Dutch extremist MP Gert Wilders, not surprisingly, the discussion tended to be overshadowed by the "cartoons controversy". Many Omani Members, who referred to the laws that exist in some Member States on Holocaust Denial, tended to believe that this a proof of European double standards: in the case of the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad there is absolute freedom of speech whereas, in other cases, there are clear rules on what is allowed and what isn't.

Ms Gruber, as well as other Members of the EP delegation, reminded that the Plenary had already taken a position on the matter with the resolution on Freedom of Speech and Religious Beliefs, adopted on 16/2/2006: freedom of expression is a fundamental part of the development of EU democracies, defended by all the Constitutions of the Member States as well as the European Convention on Human Rights. Freedom of expression must, however, also coexist with personal responsibility and be based on respect for others' sensibilities; balancing these concerns necessitates ongoing debate in a democracy - especially as pluralism and tolerance are also part of a common European heritage. The EP, Members stressed, has expressed its respect for those who have felt offended - urging, however, that they seek redress through the courts.

Members of both Delegations agreed on the need for further exchanges, stressing that fighting stereotypes should be a common priority: Majlis al Dawla Members stressed in particular that the association of terrorism with the Muslim religion, despite being common in the West, is abusive -- as the examples of Timothy McVeigh or the Tokyo sarin attack have shown.

Parliamentarians also debated the situation in Palestine and stressed that it was vital to reach a speedy conclusion of the peace process on the basis of a genuine two state solution; while Omani MPs insisted that *"there can be no peace without land"*, MEPs reminded that the EU shows its support for the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people by being the biggest donor of international aid; the European Parliament believes that the policy of isolation of the Gaza Strip has failed and especially condemns the fact that the civilian population still is subject to collective punishment. MEPs also felt that the Omani side would expect Europe to play a more important role in the region.

Another issue which was hotly debated was Iran and its nuclear programme; generally speaking, Members of the Majlis ash Shura were relieved to hear from MEPs that the European Parliament\* recognises that Article IV of the Treaty of Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) accepts the inalienable right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and believes that the only long-term solution on the nuclear issue with Iran is a negotiated one, with the International Atomic Energy Agency having an essential role to play. Omani MPs were particularly appreciative of the EP call to the US Administration to renounce military rhetoric on the issue, while noting that Iran should, nevertheless, provide full answers to the IAEA: in the words of the Majlis Ash Shura Chair, who reflected the traditional Omani preoccupations against any actions that could destabilise the regional security (particularly in the Hormuz straits), *"we in the middle east appreciate that your position is a balanced one, favouring dialogue and warning against the dangers of military intervention"*.

### Meetings with Members of the Government

**H.E Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister responsible for Foreign affairs**, stressed that due to its geographic location, Oman has a strategic role to play in the Gulf; it nevertheless traditionally follows a *"low profile approach"* which, so far, *"has been very successful"*. The Minister underlined that an Iran/US confrontation would be very unfortunate, expressing his conviction that this would however be unlikely in the short term, since *"this is a pre-electoral year in the US"* and *"especially as in the Balkans, something may happen"*. Should there be a military confrontation, however, *"we will not be part of it"*; Oman enjoys very good relations with Iran *"and this relation is important for our own stability"*.

The Minister became very frank upon expressing his conviction that *"the international community has to realise that force should not be used in international relations"*. Unfortunately, *"you are all supporting [the use of] force, like you do in Afghanistan and Iraq. (...) Afghanistan is not different from Iraq"*. In short, *"Europe has to change from this thinking of using force"*. As to any differences between the US and Europe, *"they are very thin"*. *"Iraq is now totally destroyed after 10 years of sanctions and war. (...) It is beyond any country's ability to help Iraq"*. *"The so-called coalition forces are there just to safeguard what is left"*. The Minister appeared pragmatic, nevertheless, when asked his views on a possible US withdrawal from Iraq: *"this has to be looked at very carefully -- it is a very delicate, sensitive question... you cant just come, destroy everything, and then leave. [if you are an occupation force] you still have obligations."*

H.E Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdallah did not see any differences, either, between the US and European policies on environment, accusing European countries of *"not even implementing Kyoto"* and *"harming yourselves and us too"*. If rainfall is down by 20% in the region, he assured, it is perhaps because of the US, *"but also of Europe and European policies too"*. In the minister's word, Europeans should pay attention to these warnings: *"People are aware of these facts, not only Governmental Officials, and this is why there is resentment"*. *"If you go down the street, you will see that people do not make a difference between Europe and the US"*

**Dr Rawya bint Sa'oud al bu S'eideyyeh, Minister of Higher Education** and one of the three female ministers of Oman, briefed the Delegation on her domain of responsibility; the Delegation had previously also met the President of the Sultan Qaboos University (13.000

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\* resolution adopted on 31&12&2008



undergraduates from 52 nationalities). Alongside this free public university, which boasts an educational hospital that welcomes 300.000 patients per year, the government is currently encouraging the private sector with a policy of tax breaks/financial grants and providing free plots of land. 6 private universities have already been inaugurated, and the government checks on quality of education which is provided (via its accreditation council).

There is no gender discrimination in Universities, as about 55% of graduates are girls; in some disciplines, however, such as in medicine, there is a practice of "reserved seats", but not to the point where this would constitute discrimination in favour or against either gender. Upon graduation, employment opportunities in Oman exist since, almost immediately upon graduation, most graduates find a job (50% in the public administration). Finally, there is an attempt to promote (i) IT studies and (ii) Tourism Management Studies due to the role this sector could play in the country's economy in the coming years.

Economy was the main issue debated with HE **Maqboul bin Ali Sultan, Minister of commerce and industry**: while petrol/gas exports account for 75% of total exports and 40% of the GDP, the forecast is that by 2020 this last figure will be down to 19%. This explains the diversification attempt which is underway ("vision 2020"), in favour of developing the industry, financial services, fisheries, agriculture and a knowledge-based economy. Tourism in particular directly accounts only for 5% of the GDP, without this being expected to change radically in the short term. Nevertheless, this sector is seen as the key to further growth due to the chain of jobs it creates. All in all, strong growth is expected to continue (a GDP growth of +70% is forecast, for the period 2006-2010) despite the gradual exhaustion of some natural resources, meaning steps are taken to avoid a skilled workforce deficit (which explains why the policy of "Omanisation" is ongoing).

M. Ali Sultan was reasonably optimistic on the possibility of concluding the long negotiated **EU-GCC FTA**: "*we are still struggling - even though the deal is 95% done*". Indeed, As far as Oman is concerned, "*almost 100% is ok*", even though "*It is true that there is this Human Rights clause which we do not like too much: for us an FTA is an FTA; to discuss labour law issues, for instance, we have the ILO*". Since M. Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister responsible for Foreign affairs, had not been exactly on the same wavelength on this issue\*, the final position of the Government appears nevertheless a bit unclear.

Finally, on sovereign funds, the Minister felt that Europe and the West are a bit too apprehensive; "*it is true, however, that there should be more clarity -and as long as there is transparency, in both auditing and accounting, we can't see why these Funds shouldn't be welcome*".

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\* "*You want us to reach agreement on the lines of the way you think*". "*Your proposals are felt as insulting*". "*Since you want to impose on us your ideas on Human Rights, we have no agreement*". "*You have introduced things which do not fit with our beliefs*". "*We are Muslims; your governments are secular, and you want to impose secularism (...)* secular states have destroyed the structure of the family"

## Delegation for Relations with the Gulf States and Yemen

**MUSCAT (OMAN), 19 MARCH.** 7 members of the Delegation for Relations with the Gulf States of the European Parliament, led by Ms Lilli Gruber (PSE, Italy), have continued their talks today, meeting the Minister of Education, HE Dr Rawiya Al Busaidiya, HE Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdallah, State Minister for Foreign Affairs and HE Maqboul bin Ali bin Sultan, Minister of Trade and Industry. The EP Delegation 5-day official visit in Oman, at the invitation of the Majlis Ash'Shura, is part of a regional tour undertaken by the Delegation, which also spent 2 days in Qatar, discussing primarily energy and financial issues.

In the name of the Delegation, Ms GRUBER expressed her “*gratitude for the exceptional hospitality shown by the Majlis Ash'Shura*”, appreciating, in particular, the formidable progress achieved by Oman in reconciling modernity and tradition in the past 30 years. Extensive talks held in Muscat with several Members of the Majlis Ash'Shura and the Majlis A'Dawla, including both Chairs, HE Sheikh Ahmed Al Issai HE Dr Yaha bin Mahfoudh Al Mendheri as well as Vice-President Nasser bin Hilal Al Maawli, allowed for an open and frank exchange of views on a series of issues of common interest.

At the request of Majlis Ash'Shura MPs, who sought clarifications from the European side on the “cartoons issue”, Ms Gruber stressed that freedom of expression is a fundamental European value which, exercised responsibly, should not be taken to the extent of offending the sensitivities of other peoples' cultures and religious beliefs. As it is vital to promote mutual understanding, the genuine and deep concern of the Muslim world, as expressed by Majlis Ash'Shura Members will be conveyed to other MEPs by the Delegation when back in Europe.

Parliamentarians also debated the situation in Palestine and stressed that it was vital to reach a speedy conclusion of the peace process on the basis of a genuine two state solution. The EU shows its support for the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people by being the biggest donor of international aid; the European Parliament believes that the policy of isolation of the Gaza Strip has failed and especially condemns the fact that the civilian population still is subject to collective punishment. MEPs also felt that the Omani side would expect Europe to play a more important role in the region.

Other issues discussed included Iran –with both sides agreeing on the need to preserve regional stability and arrive at a peaceful, negotiated, long-term solution. Ms Gruber recalled the official EP position that while Iran should cooperate fully with the IAEA, the US administration should also renounce all military rhetoric and/or threats.

The Omani side also asked the Delegation to convey to the EU that the Free Trade Agreement should be finalized as early as possible, by removing the last few obstacles for a successful conclusion of the negotiation. It was also strongly agreed that both sides will continue to promote intercultural dialogue through encouraging educational and training exchanges. Finally, the EP Delegates stressed the importance of more frequent interparliamentary contacts, “*inviting Members from the Majlis Ash'Shura and the Majlis A'Dawla to visit us, as soon as possible, in Brussels or Strasbourg*”.

The MEPs taking part in this visit are Ms Lilli GRUBER (Italy), Chair of the Delegation, Mr Tobias PFLUEGER, Vice-President (Germany), Mr John PURVIS (UK), Ms Dushana ZDRAVKOVA (Bulgaria), Mr Atanas PAPARIZOV (BULGARIA), Ms Ramona MANESCU (Romania) and Mr Patrick LOUIS (France), representing five different political groups across the EP spectrum.
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# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES, INCLUDING YEMEN

### Working Group visit to Qatar and Oman 15 - 22 March 2008

#### PROGRAMME

#### Friday 14 March

#### **Doha, Qatar**

10:00-12:00      *Secretariat only*

evening              *Preparatory meeting with EU Presidency / EC Delegation Riyadh*  
Arrival of MEPs and transfer to:  
*Moevenpick Tower and suites Doha*  
*West Bay*  
*Doha, Qatar*

#### Saturday 15 March

#### **Ras Laffan, Doha**

10.30-12.15      Visit of the Ras Laffan Industrial site: Briefing on natural gas & energy resources (LNG / North Gas field)

14:00              Departure from Ras Laffan

17.00-19.00      Visit of Al Jazeera EN/AR networks and discussion with journalists

#### Sunday 16 March

#### **Doha, Qatar**

08:30-09:15      Working breakfast with

- French Presidency in presence of EU-MS HoMs
- M. Bernard Savage, HoD, EC Delegation Riyadh

10:30              Meeting with the National Human Rights Committee

11:30              Meeting with HE Mohammed bin Moubarak A-Khulaifi, Chair of the *Majlis Esh-Shoura* and HE Issa bin Rabia Al-Kawari, Vice-Chair

12:30              Meeting with Majlis Esh-Shoura MPs  
*Dana Club, Nimro room*

14:30-16:30      Visit of *the Qatar Foundation*, in charge of educational / research projects

#### Monday 17 March

#### **Doha - Muscat**

- 08:00-08:45 Meeting with HE Mohammed Abdullah Mutib Al Rumaihi  
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
- 09:00-10:00 Meeting with Vice-PM and Minister of Energy and Industry, Mr. Abdallah  
Bin Hamad Al Attiyah  
*Qatar Petroleum Headquarters*
- 15:40 Arrival to Muscat International Airport by flight QR 164, and transfer to  
*Hotel InterContinental*  
*PO Box 398, Muscat 114*  
*Tel. + 968 246 800 00*
- 19:30 Reception & briefing hosted by the French Presidency in presence of EU  
Heads of Mission

**Tuesday 18 March**

**Muscat**

- 09:00 Meeting with H.E the Sheikh Ahmed Al Issai, Chair of Majlis Shura.
- 09:30 Interparliamentary meeting with the Majlis, co-chaired by:
  - H.E Naser bin Hilal al Mawli, deputy President of al Majlis,
  - Ms Lilli Gruber, Chair of the EP D-Gulf Delegation
- 11:30 Meeting with HE Ali bin Saoud al Bimani, President of the Sultan Qabous  
University
- 13:00 Meeting with HE Dr. Yahya bin Mahfouz Al Munziri, president of Majlis Al  
Dawla
- 17:15 Departure from the hotel to the French Embassy
- 17:30 Meeting with students from the French-Omani Centre
- 20:00 Reception organized by H.E Naser bin Hilal al Mawli, Al Majlis Vice-Pdt  
*Grand Hyatt*

**Wednesday 19 March**

**Muscat**

- 09:00 Meeting with H.E Dr. Rawya bint Sa'oud al bu S'eideyyeh,  
Minister of higher education
- 10:30 Meeting with H.E Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdallah,  
Minister responsible of foreign affairs
- 12:00 Meeting with H.E Maqboul bin Ali Sultan,  
Minister of commerce and industry

16:30 Press conference

20:00 Dinner hosted by the EP delegation in honour of Majlis Al Dawla and the Majlis al Shura

*Intercontinental Hotel*  
*Intercontinental Hotel, Salon Caprice*

**Thursday 20 March**

**Muscat**

10:00 Visit of old Muscat (Jalali Fort)

13:00 Working lunch hosted by H.E Sa'ed bin Mohamed Al Sadi, president deputy of Al Majlis

*Hotel "Bander Al Jasseh"*

16:00 - 18:00 Meeting with Majlis Al Dawla Members

**Friday 21 March**

**field-trip to Nizwa / Jabal al Akhdar**

09:45 Departure from the hotel

11:00 Visit of the city of Nizwa & surroundings (Jabal al Akhdar)

evening Return to Muscat

**Saturday 22 March**

**Muscat**

10:30 - 14:30 Briefing and Reception hosted by H.E. Taleb Bin Miran Al Raisi, Head Department of economic and technical cooperation in Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*The Diplomatic Club*

15:00 - 17:30 Visit and Briefing at the Middle East Desalination Research Centre

**Sunday 23 March**

**Muscat**

*Secretariat only*  
11:00 - 12:00 *Coordination meeting with the Majlis Ash Shura / Majlis Ash Dawla Protocol*  
14:30 - 15:30 *Final debriefing with EU French Presidency on logistics (régie, press aspects, etc)*

**DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES, INCLUDING YEMEN****Working group visit to Qatar and Oman**  
**17- 22 March 2008**List of participants (14)

<b><u>Members</u></b> (7)	<b><u>Group</u></b>	<b><u>Country</u></b>
<b>Ms GRUBER</b> , Lilli, Chair • Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	PSE	Italy
<b>Mr PFLUGER</b> , Tobias, 1st Vice-Chair • Committee on Foreign Affairs	GUE	Germany
<b>Ms ZDRAVKOVA</b> , Dushana • Committee on Constitutional Affairs, Vice-Chair	PPE-DE	Bulgaria
<b>Mr PURVIS</b> , John • Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs	PPE-DE	United Kingdom
<b>Mr PAPANIZOV</b> , Atanas • Committee on Industry, Energy and Research [ <i>Rapporteur</i> ]	PSE	Bulgaria
<b>Ms MĂNESCU</b> , Ramona Nicole • Committee on Culture and Education	ALDE	Romania
<b>Mr LOUIS</b> , Patrick* • Committee on Industry, Research and Energy	IND/DEM	France
<b><u>General Secretariat of the European Parliament</u></b> (2)		
<b>Mr KAMARIS</b> , Philippe • Delegation for Relations with the Gulf States, DG External Policies	Administrator	
<b>Ms DEVOS</b> , Nicole • Delegation for Relations with the Gulf States, DG External Policies	Administrative Assistant	
<b><u>European Commission</u></b> (1)		
<b>Mr SAVAGE</b> , Bernard • Delegation of the EC, Riyadh	Head of Delegation	
<b><u>Political Groups staff</u></b> (2)		
<b>Ms MUTAFCHIEVA</b> , Radostina	Advisor, PSE	
<b>Mr KRIETEMEYER</b> , Rupert	Advisor, EPP-ED	
<b><u>Interpreters</u></b> (2)		
<b>Mr AL-KHUDRI</b> , Mounir	AR-EN booth, Head of Team	
<b>Ms HLAL</b> , Chirin	AR-EN booth	

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\* Participated only to the IPM in Oman